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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN CYPRUS

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 2 of resolution 759 (1992) of 12 June 1992, in which the Security Council requested me, after consulting the troop-contributing Governments of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) as envisaged in paragraph 56 of my report to the Security Council of 31 May 1992 (S/24050 and Add.1), to submit specific proposals to the Council no later than 1 September 1992 on the restructuring of the Force, such proposals to be based on the realistic options available in current circumstances.

2. In my letter of 21 August 1992 to the President of the Security Council I explained the reasons that made it necessary to postpone the consultations requested by the Security Council, resulting in the delayed submission of the present report.

3. The consultations duly took place on 9 and 10 September 1992. They were chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Mr. Marrack Goulding, who was assisted by the Force Commander of UNFICYP, Major-General Michael Minehane. Each of the eight contributing countries (Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) were represented. Most of their delegations included experts from capitals, who had come to New York for the purpose.

4. After briefing the representatives of the contributing countries on the current operational situation in Cyprus and on the results of the proximity talks on the set of ideas (see my report of 21 August 1992 (S/24472)), the Secretariat stated the following views:

(a) The normal practice when establishing a United Nations peace-keeping operation was to define the operation's mandate and then to calculate the resources required to implement it; the mandate should determine the resources and not vice versa;

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

(b) In the case of UNFICYP, a careful review of the Force's mandate and resources had been carried out in November 1990 (see S/21982 of 7 December 1990). Following the adoption of resolution 759 (1992), the Secretariat had re-examined the results of that review and had concluded that they remained valid both as regards the Force's mandate and the resources required to carry it out. A prerequisite for restructuring the Force would therefore seem to be a change in its mandate;

(c) However, the inability of some of the existing troop contributors to maintain their present contributions, and the impossibility of finding replacements for them under the present system of financing, seemed to make it inevitable that a change in the mandate would have to be re-examined;

(d) In the Secretariat's view, however, it would not be proper to address that question at that time;

(e) Under resolution 774 (1992) of 26 August 1992, the Security Council had expressed its expectation that an overall framework settlement would be concluded in 1992 and that 1993 would be the transitional period during which the settlement would be implemented. The Council had gone on to reaffirm that the status quo was not acceptable and had called upon the Secretary-General to recommend alternative courses of action to resolve the Cyprus problem if an agreement did not emerge from the talks that would reconvene in October;

(f) The above decisions of the Security Council implied that by the beginning of 1993 either an overall framework agreement would have been concluded and a transitional period would have begun or an agreement would not have been concluded and the Council would be considering alternative courses of action. Either eventuality could be expected to lead to changes in the UNFICYP mandate; only then would it become possible to define and evaluate options for changing the Force's structure and size.

In view of those considerations, the Secretariat asked whether the troop-contributing countries would be prepared to put on hold the plans that they had already communicated to the Secretariat for withdrawing or reducing their contingents in UNFICYP.

5. Most of the contributing countries, while acknowledging that a critical moment had been reached in the efforts of successive Secretaries-General to assist the parties in Cyprus in reaching a settlement, argued that the time had come for change in UNFICYP, that the status quo could not be maintained and that decisions must be taken now. Their authorities believed that the Force could maintain its existing mandate with fewer resources and that, in particular, savings could be achieved if some of the tasks were entrusted to military observers rather than infantry units. Their desire to reduce their contributions also reflected the fact that they had all responded positively to requests to contribute military personnel to the new peace-keeping operations that had been set up during 1992. None of them was able to put its planned reduction on hold until the outcome of the next round of political talks was known.

6. Before the consultations began, contributing Governments had already given the Secretariat more or less firm indications that they would be reducing their contingents as follows:

(a) Austria: reduction of its contingent by 63 soldiers (approximately 15 per cent) by 15 December 1992;

(b) Canada: possible withdrawal of 61 support personnel (approximately 10 per cent) at an unspecified time;

(c) Denmark: withdrawal of its infantry battalion, numbering 323 personnel, by 15 December 1992;

(d) Finland: withdrawal of its entire contingent of seven persons by the end of 1993;

(e) United Kingdom: savings of 25 per cent of the costs of its participation in UNFICYP, to be achieved by 15 December 1992.

7. On the basis of indications (a) to (d) above and pending confirmation and elucidation of (e), the Force Commander had prepared a plan that in his judgement provided the most viable short-term option for absorbing the effect of the reductions in the Austrian and Danish contingents and retaining the greatest possible capability to continue carrying out the present mandate of UNFICYP. That would be achieved by restructuring and reorganizing the Force on a three-sector, three-battalion basis, with the United Kingdom contingent assuming responsibility for the whole of the sector at present controlled by the Danish contingent. Even so, the Force's ability to maintain surveillance of the buffer zone would be diminished. The number of observation posts would have to be reduced, as would the frequency of patrolling on foot as well as the Force's reaction capability.

8. During the consultations, the United Kingdom delegation stated that the bulk of its planned reductions would comprise the whole of the Force scout car squadron, which had hitherto been the core element in the Force's rapid reaction capability and which would have played a key role in the Force Commander's above-mentioned plan to absorb the effects of the imminent Austrian reduction and Danish withdrawal. The size of the Force Reserve would as a consequence be reduced and the Force Commander would no longer have the capacity to react with sufficient strength and speed to violations of the buffer zone and to other incidents that could lead to an increase in tension. The Force Commander was obliged therefore to conclude that the withdrawal of the Force scout car squadron at the same time as the Danish battalion would further compromise his ability to implement the existing mandate.

9. The consultations also reviewed the arguments for and against the use of military observers in UNFICYP. Most of the contributing countries believed that at least some of the tasks currently performed by the Force could be carried out more economically if military observers were to be used instead of infantry units. They saw that as the most promising way of reducing the cost

of their contributions to the Force and cited the use of military observers in other peace-keeping operations. The Secretariat said that, for reasons set out at length in the 1990 review report, they did not believe that military observers, except on a very limited scale, would preserve the Force's present ability not only to observe developments in the buffer zone but also to intervene rapidly to bring under control incidents which threatened to escalate. They also pointed out that the deployment of sufficient observers to maintain a credible level of surveillance of the buffer zone would create considerable additional operational costs for the United Nations which could well exceed those incurred at present. If voluntary contributions failed to produce the resources needed to cover these costs, the military observer option would become unviable. Governments had perforce had to accept very late reimbursement of their extra and extraordinary costs; military observers could not be asked to accept late payment of their local living costs.

10. The consultations confirmed the validity of the statement in the 1990 review report that "UNFICYP's current reliance on voluntary contributions to finance the costs for which the United Nations is responsible will jeopardize its future and should be changed to assessed contributions" (S/21982, para. 53 (d)). The contributing Governments have been commendably tolerant of the inadequate and unfair financial arrangements for UNFICYP. But now, as their recent decisions have shown, their patience has run out and UNFICYP in its present form will shortly become unviable unless the Security Council decides to change the basis of the Force's financing.

11. The consequences of this situation cannot, however, be addressed until the outcome of the next and decisive round of talks is known. If those talks succeed and 1993 becomes the transitional period for the implementation of a settlement, the tasks of UNFICYP may become even more extensive, albeit for a period of fixed duration. In that case, it would have to be restored to its present strength, and perhaps enlarged, which might only be achievable if a more satisfactory system of financing was accepted by the Security Council. If, on the other hand, the talks do not succeed, the future of UNFICYP will have to be examined in the light of the alternative courses of action that the Council might then decide to take in order to resolve the Cyprus problem.

12. Meanwhile, I have instructed the Force Commander to absorb as best he can the effects of the forthcoming reductions in the Force's strength and to use his best endeavours to maintain effective control of the buffer zone, as well as carrying out UNFICYP humanitarian functions. He will endeavour to do so with the continued cooperation of both sides. It is to be recognized, however, that when all the reductions foreseen for the current mandate period have been effected the resources available to the Force Commander will fall short of the minimum judged necessary to carry out the Force's existing tasks. This makes it all the more important that both sides should exercise the greatest possible restraint and make every effort to avoid incidents that could lead to tension in the buffer zone. I appeal to them to do so.